

February 2, 2009

Honorable David A. Bowers, Mayor
Honorable Sherman P. Lea, Vice Mayor
Honorable Gwendolyn W. Mason, Council Member
Honorable Alvin L. Nash, Council Member
Honorable Anita J. Price, Council Member
Honorable Court G. Rosen, Council Member
Honorable David B. Trinkle, Council Member

Dear Mayor Bowers and Members of City Council:

Subject: 2008 Annual Report of the Architectural Review Board
(ARB)

I am pleased to provide this report on the Board's activity, accomplishments, and attendance for calendar year 2008.

The level of activity in the historic districts during 2008 was extraordinary, despite the economic downturn. Staff and the ARB considered 341 cases, up 35% over the previous year. Nearly three out of four cases were approved through the administrative approval process or through in-kind repair/replacement approval. A detailed list of Certificates of Appropriateness is attached.

New bylaws adopted in March 2008 implemented two best practices to improve the functioning of the Board. First, the types of work eligible for administrative approval were expanded. This change led to a large number of projects approved through this fast track approval process, which typically takes four days or less. The second change was the adoption of a consent agenda and a new meeting procedure. These changes have led to shorter meetings and less time for applicants to wait for their cases to be called.

While the number of cases increased, appeal activity was down. Typically, five to seven cases are appealed to City Council each year. However, only two appeals were filed in 2008. After tabling the issue for six months, City Council overturned an ARB decision to deny a request to demolish 806 Marshall Avenue. Later in the year, City Council upheld the ARB's decision to approve the dog park fencing in Highland Park.

The highlights of the past year were the designation of Roanoke as a Preserve America Community in November and the drafting of a Historic Preservation Plan, an internal document to guide future preservation activities.

Staff worked to leverage Certified Local Government grant funds to support a two-day Preservation Workshop Series that targets property owners, contractors, housing organizations, neighborhood organizations, and ARB members. The workshops will be held on May 15th and 16th at the Claude Moore Education Complex. Certified Local Government grant funds were also received in September for the windshield survey and inventory of the Wasena neighborhood. Unfortunately, this funding was later cut due to the state's budget situation.

Staff continues efforts to increase awareness of the historic district requirements through annual spring mailings to all property owners in the historic districts and all contractors in the Roanoke Valley. The Department of Real Estate Valuation also sends notices to all new property owners in the historic districts. To further enhance these efforts, the ARB has worked with staff to create an education and outreach program that will begin in 2009.

The ARB's increasing caseload demonstrates that people are continuing to invest in and add value to Roanoke's historic districts. We are committed to continue in our role to facilitate this investment and ensure that Roanoke's historic downtown and neighborhoods are appropriately protected and preserved.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Botkin, Chair
Architectural Review Board

cc: Darlene L. Burcham, City Manager
William M. Hackworth, City Attorney
Steven J. Talevi, Assistant City Attorney
Stephanie Moon, City Clerk
Tom Carr, Director, Planning Building and Development
Erica J. Taylor, Agent, Architectural Review Board

Architectural Review Board Cases

